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UNCLAS ALMATY 002445

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED ON POSSIBLE THIRD COUNTRY
RESETTLEMENT OF UZBEK ASYLUM SEEKERS IN KYRGYZSTAN

REFTEL: STATE 121739

1. (SBU) On June 30, Astana PO met with MFA's Director for Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation Akan Rakhmetulin and delivered reftel demarche, asking Kazakhstan to consider providing temporary refuge to Uzbek asylum seekers in Kyrgyzstan. Rakhmetulin remarked that Foreign Minister Tokayev had suggested to Ambassador Ordway during their June 28 meeting (septel) that Kyrgyzstan should allow UNHCR to take the lead to deflect pressure from Uzbekistan. PO noted that they had not discussed, however, whether there was any possibility of allowing these Uzbeks safe haven in Kazakhstan. (Note: Ambassador did make a reference to the possibility, but Tokayev did not respond. End Note.) Rakhmetulin promised to immediately brief Tokayev on the request.

2. (SBU) Rakhmetulin questioned PO closely on the composition of the teams interviewing the Uzbek asylum seekers, particularly if organizations other than UNHCR were participating. (Comment: While not hostile, Rakhmetulin's tone hinted at suspicion that the interviews are being skewed in favor of a finding of refugee status. End Comment.) PO simply noted that in her experience UNHCR did not invite outsiders to conduct their interviews. The MFA Director also asked who had suggested Kazakhstan. PO responded that Kazakhstan was easily a natural top choice with Kazakhstan's internal stability and geographical, linguistic, and cultural proximity to Uzbekistan.

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